6 HELP DESK PRACTICES

THAT ARE DAMAGING YOUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Are all your help desk initiatives delivering intended results? Here's a reality check on some common help desk practices.

ManageEngine Analytics Plus

6 help desk practices that are damaging your customer experience

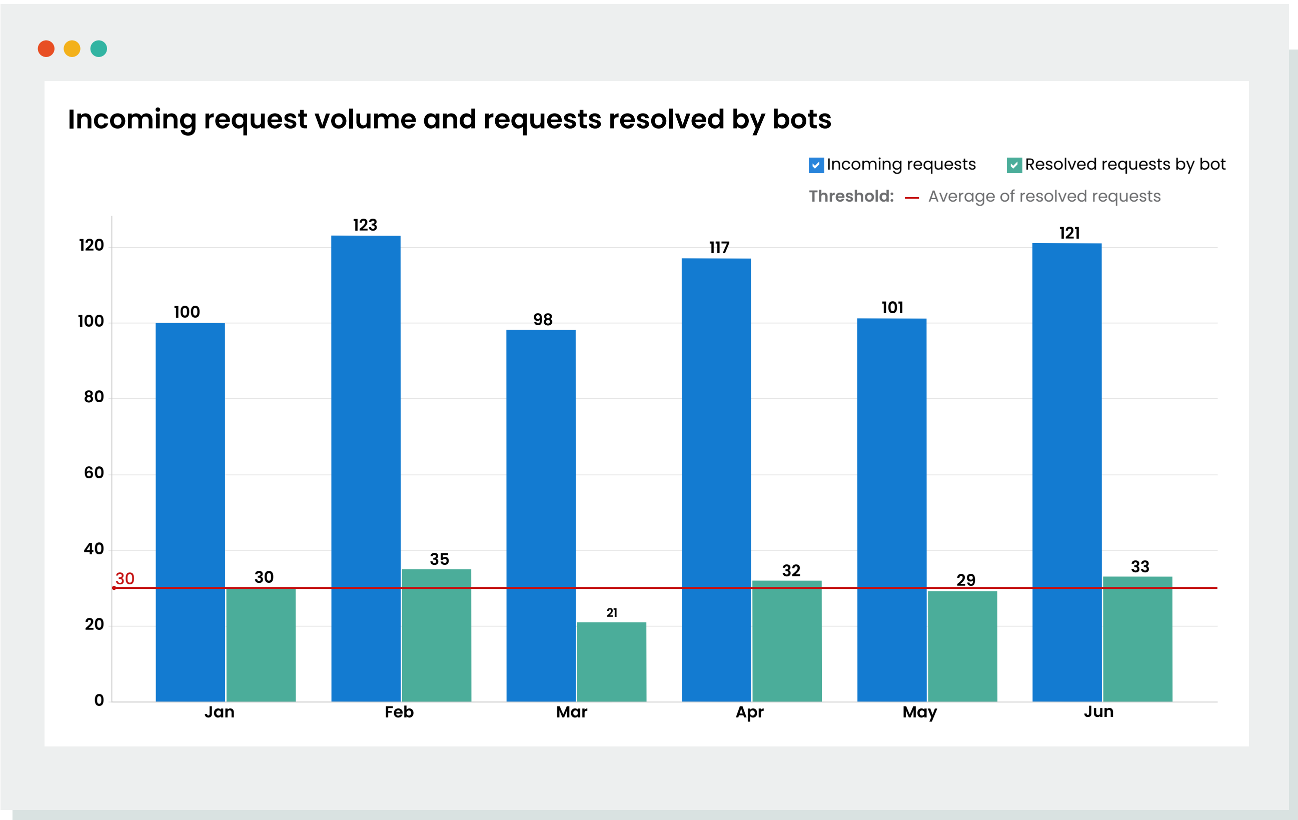
Introduction

Help desk administrators often introduce new ideas for the help desk to simplify processes and ensure smoother operations. These practices can have a negative effect because they might not always ensure the best experience for end users. In this e-book, we'll evaluate analytics to see how poor help desk support practices could end up adversely impacting customer satisfaction.

1

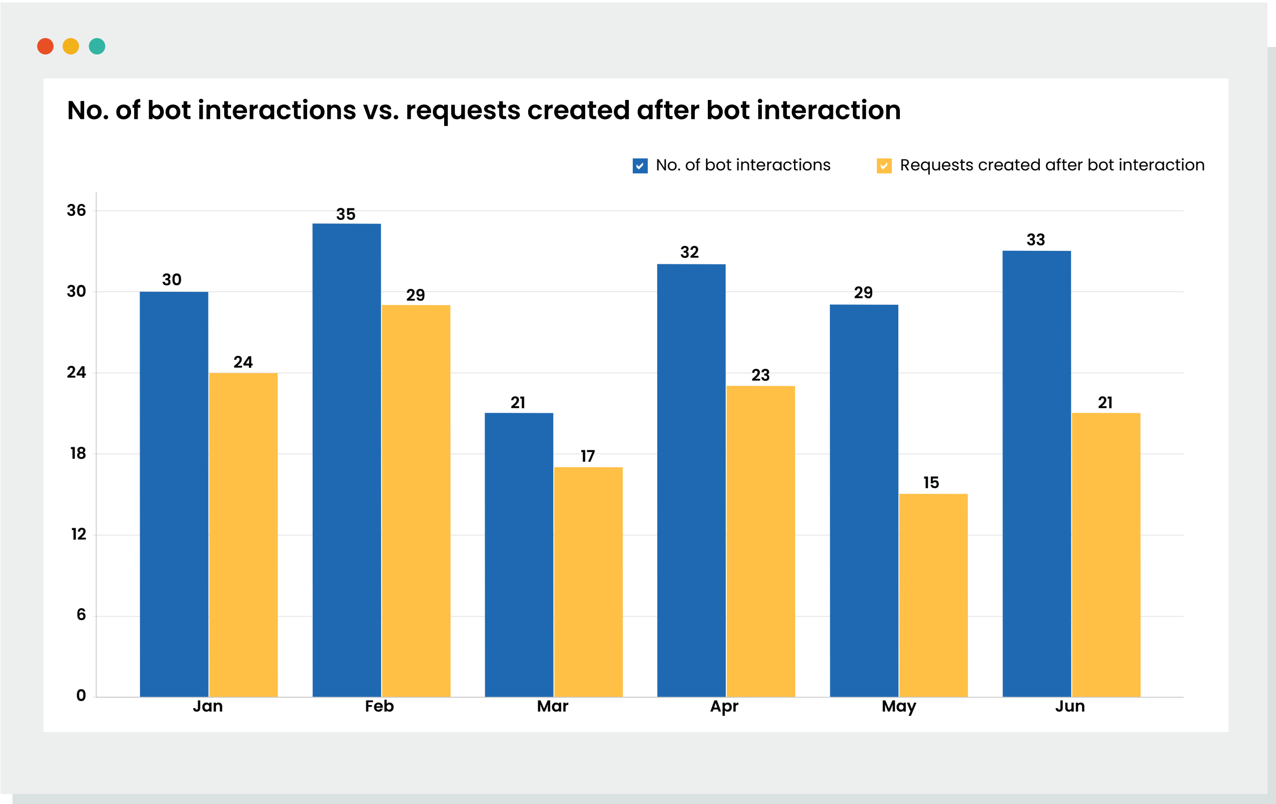
Urging people to talk to bots first

Almost every IT help desk has now implemented bots to reduce the help desk workload. Does an end user need assistance to reset their password? A bot can seamlessly walk the user through the steps to reset the password. Bots act as an additional member of the team, and service end-user requests faster, ensuring faster resolutions. But, how do you measure if organizations really benefit from bots? One way is to measure the total number of incoming requests alongside those that were resolved by bots.



The report above illustrates the incoming request volume along with the total requests resolved by bots. The threshold line represents the average number of tickets resolved by bots.

This report proves that bots handle nearly 30% of the help desk workload. Now, let's find out if the solutions provided by bots truly help end users. The report below shows the number of requests resolved by bots alongside the number of requests created after the users talked to a bot.

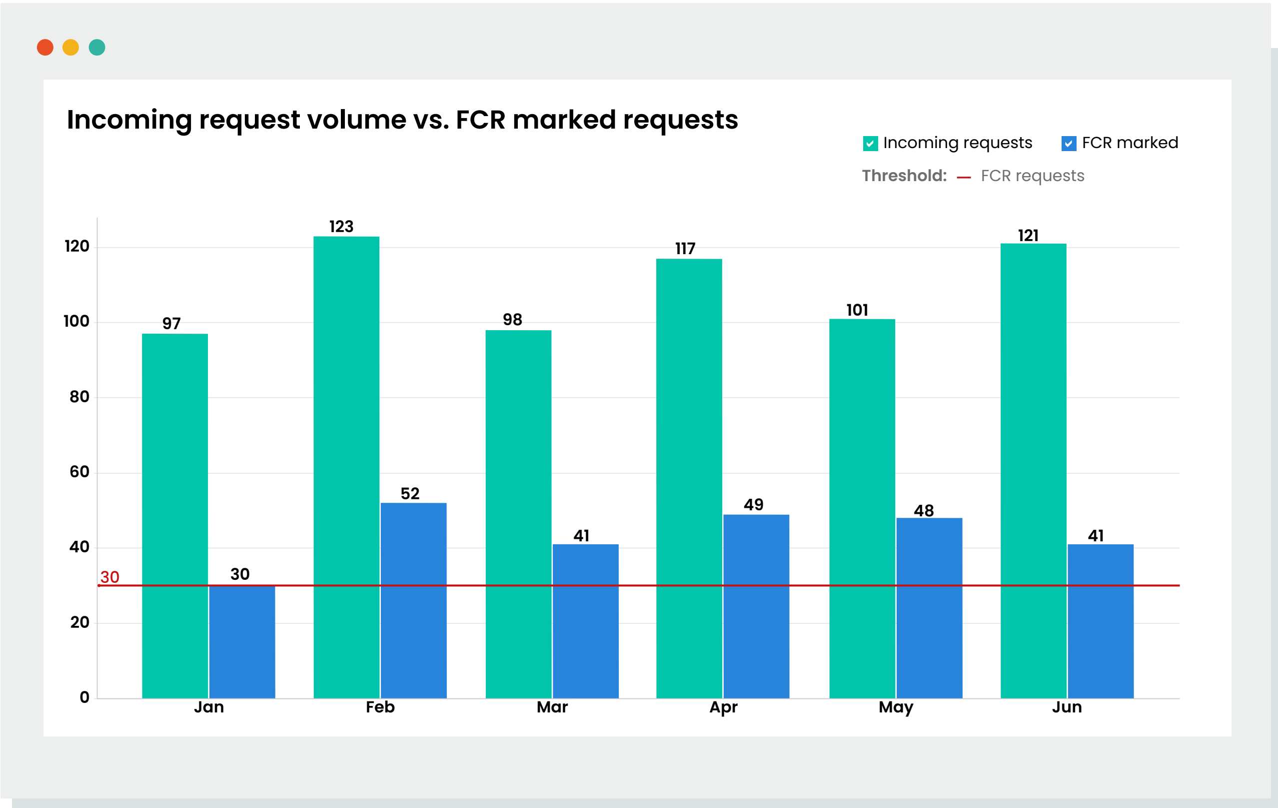


This report shows that users ended up creating a request even after an interaction with a bot, indicating ineffectiveness. This could be due to a variety of reasons, such as bots are unable to identify the underlying issue behind user problems, or that bots aren't able to handle a variety of end-user issues. It could also be because end users prefer to talk to human agents.

There are two ways to proceed:

a Go back to the drawing board and assess whether bots were introduced prematurely:

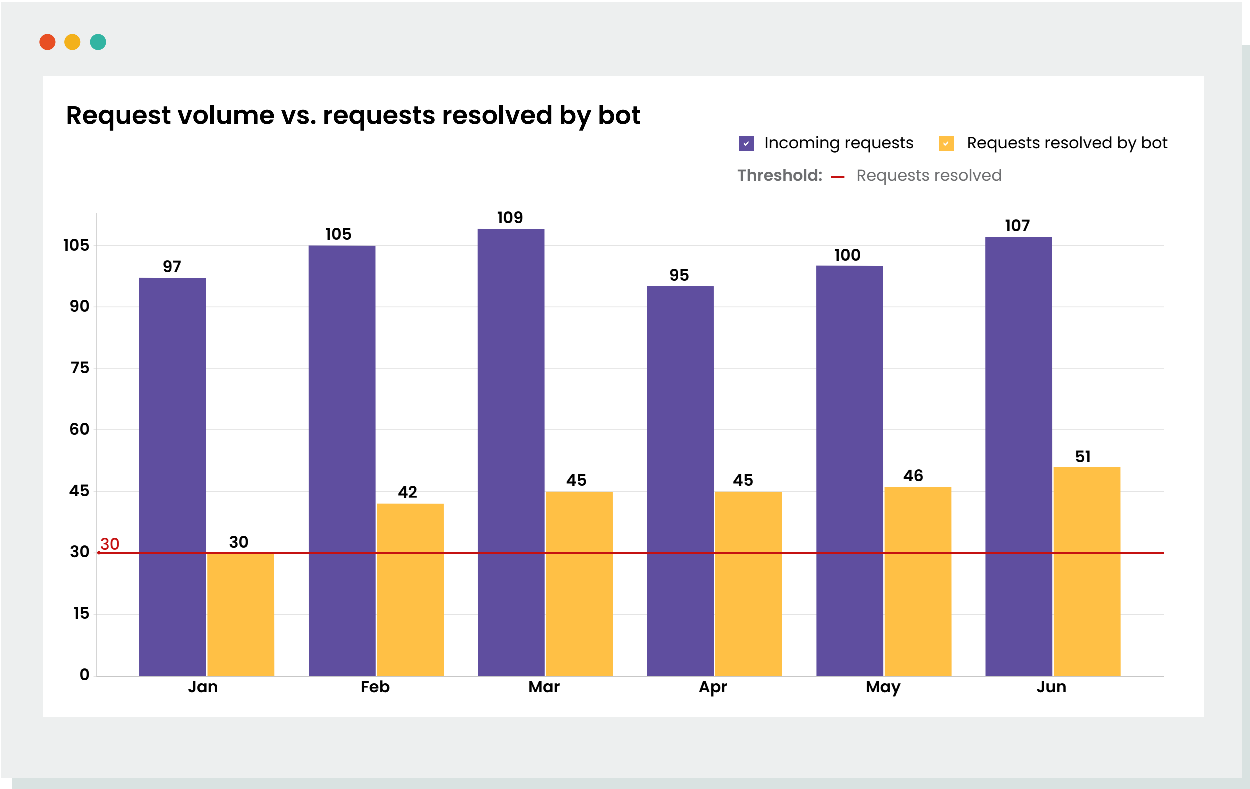
The best time to introduce bots is when your help desk resolves about 30% of incoming requests through first call resolution. The graph below shows the historical trend of total requests resolved and those resolved through first call resolutions.



The graph, created using data from approximately six months before bots were introduced, shows that a little over 30% of requests have been resolved by first call resolution. This means this help desk was ready for bots, and bots were implemented at the right time.

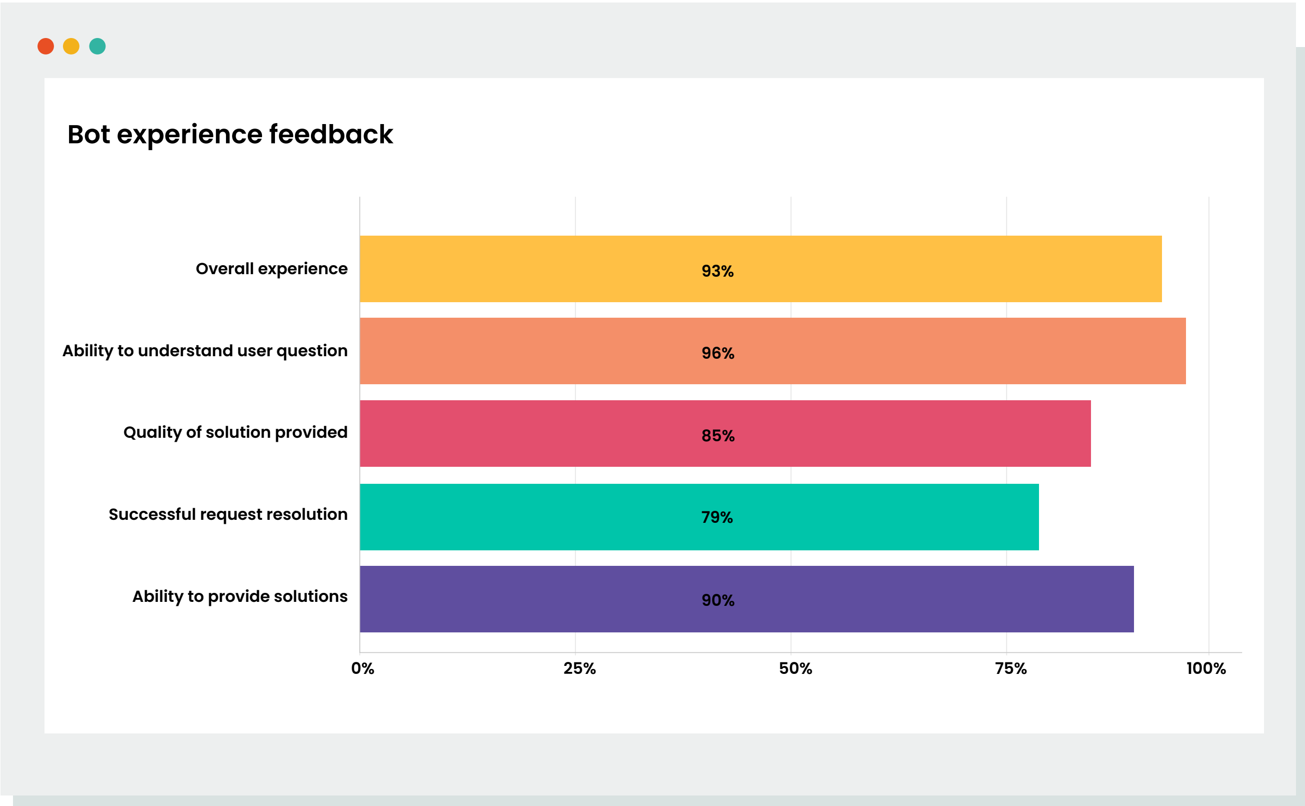
b Evaluate the quality, complexity, and efficiency of solutions provided by bots:

A common reason for the failure of chat bots is the lack of versatility. Bots are great at resolving simple problems, such as password resets or requests for information, but fail to provide satisfactory resolutions for complex requests.



c Measure user experience using a survey:

Reach out to the end users through a feedback survey to gauge their experience on interacting with bots. A common, one-size-fits-all survey form may not be the ideal choice to collect feedback on users' interaction with bots, so consider introducing a customized template for bot interactions. Here's a sample report that shows the survey results for user interaction with bots.



2

Over promoting the use of the self-service portal

Most IT help desks have replaced their accustomed method of submitting requests via email with a self-service portal. A self-service portal not only helps end users raise requests effortlessly via prebuilt templates, it also enables the technicians to categorize and handle requests more efficiently. Though there are numerous benefits to a self-service portal, an abrupt shift from emailing requests to using a self-service portal is an unhealthy practice that might result in frustrating end users.

Here are some common mistakes organizations tend to commit while implementing their self-service portal:

a. Too many requests templates:

It is good to have several templates to cater to a range of service requests, but too many of those can make it challenging for end users to find the right template to use.

b. Having a few or just one common template for all requests:

Requests come into the help desk from multiple directions. So, it's important to have customized templates to capture, categorize, and prioritize tickets to provide streamlined resolution. Without this, end users might have to go through the same template for all their requests, and technicians might be left with insufficient information to process them.

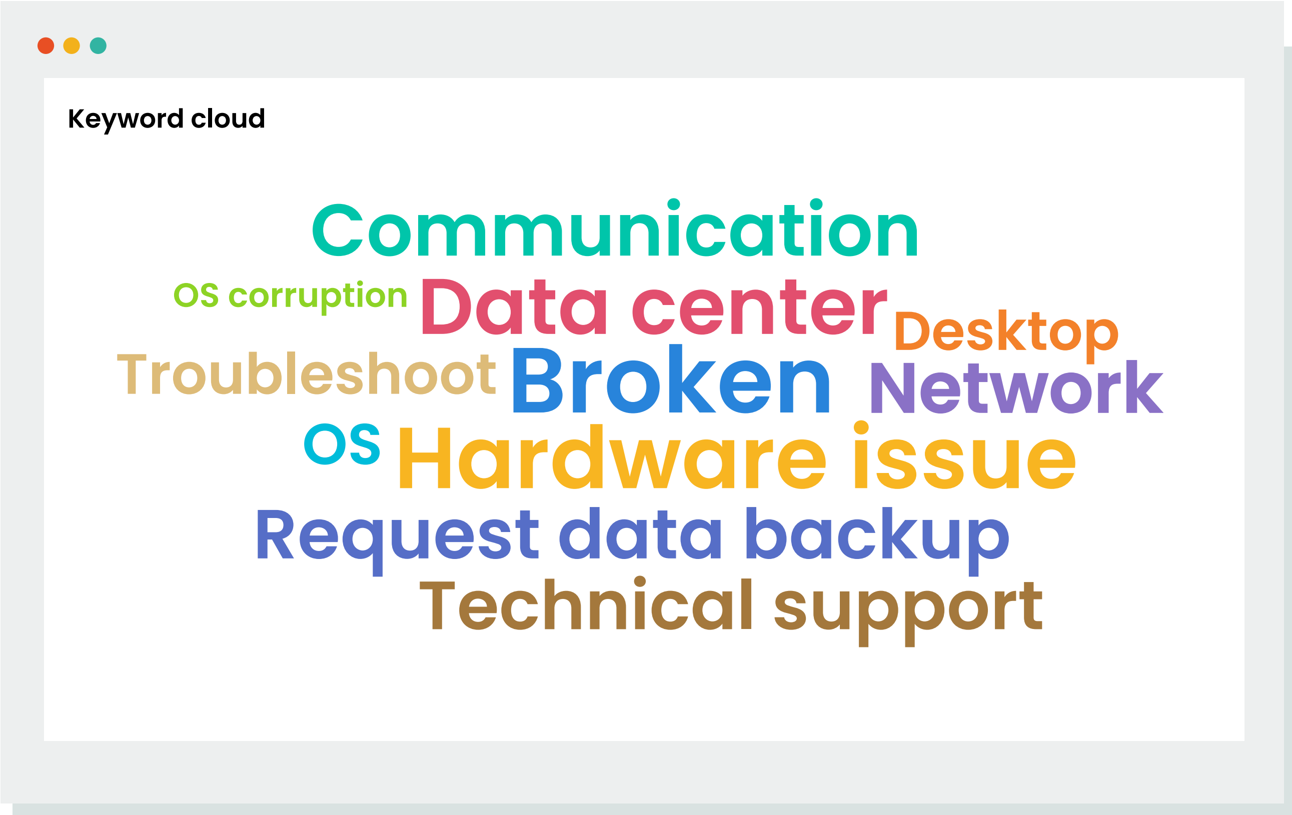
c. Not customizing the request templates to organization needs:

Going with standard templates that do not align with the common request categories is challenging for both end users and technicians. It's important to fine-tune the self-service portal with customized templates per the organization's needs, which will save time and effort for users and technicians.

What can be done to fix these issues?

a Refine the self-service portal with request templates based on the needs of your organization:

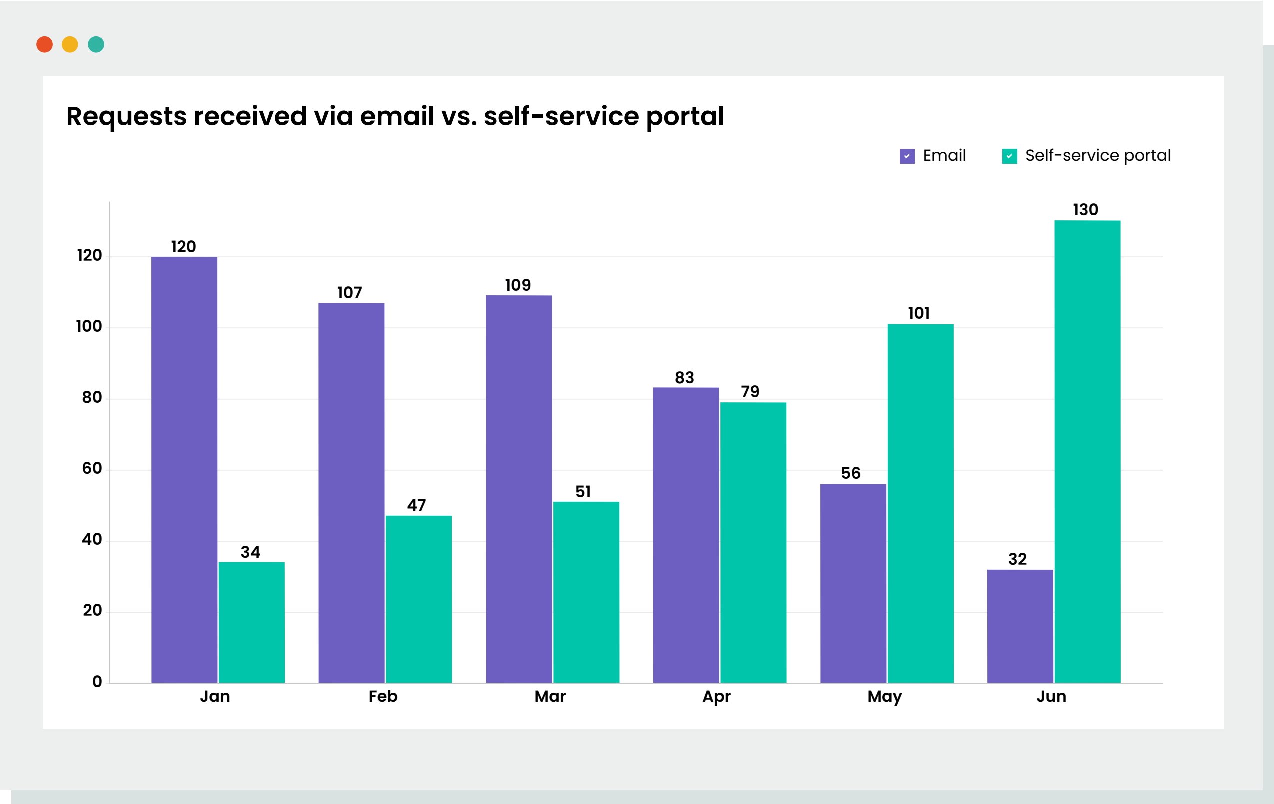
End users tend to describe their request in the subject line. Analyze and identify the most common requests and their categories by visualizing them using a word cloud.



The report above is built by analyzing the frequently-used keywords from the subject lines of request emails. It can help you understand the nature and category of service requests from end users. This can also be used to populate the self-service portal with the required templates.

b Measure the success of self-service adoption:

Compare the adoption of self-service to the other modes of request creation such as the email mode. The best time to disable email mode is when 80% of the total requests are created using the self-service portal.



The report above illustrates the gradual adoption of the self-service portal by the end users starting from January until June. This indicates that users are adopting the self-service portal organically, and that the other modes are ready to be disabled. A gradual adoption of the self-service mode is a healthy practice, and ensures smoother transition from email-to-self-service for end users.

3

Trying to resolve all requests using KB articles

A knowledge base is undoubtedly one of the key implementations in an IT help desk. It holds articles and technical documentation to help end users resolve issues by themselves. A KB holds benefits like giving instant, round-the-clock solutions to end users, and frees up technicians to resolve major issues by reducing ticket volume. However, to increase the use of KB articles and enable users to help themselves, help desks end up with one or more of these unhealthy practices:

a. Mandating the use of use KB articles:

It's always better to suggest the KB to end users while raising a request rather than pushing them to use the knowledge base. While most end users prefer to solve their issues themselves, some might prefer seeking a technician's help.

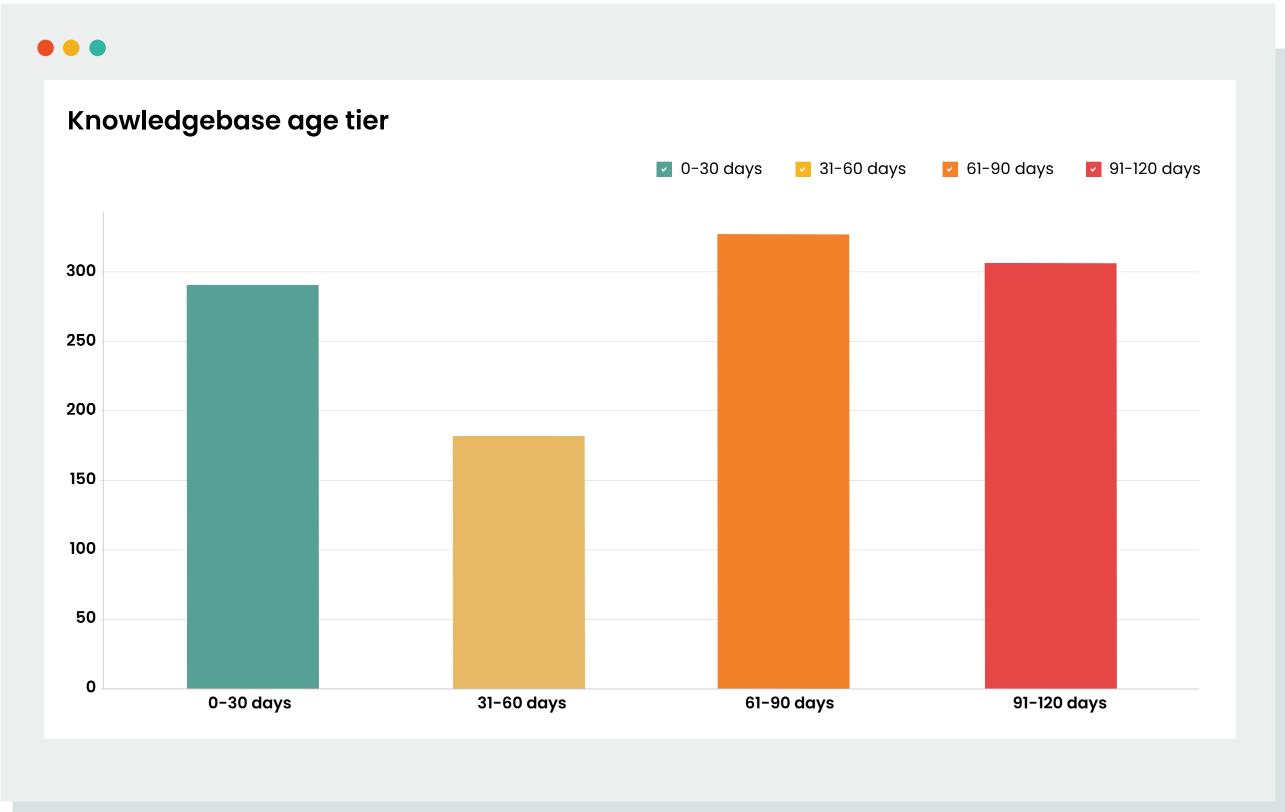
b. Trying to resolve all the requests using KB articles:

Not all requests can be resolved using KB articles. Complex or high-impact issues that warrants technicians' assistance should not be made to go through the KB articles. For instance, KB articles can be used for installing new software or for basic troubleshooting, but a technician might be needed when users encounter incompatibility between newly installed software and hardware specifications.

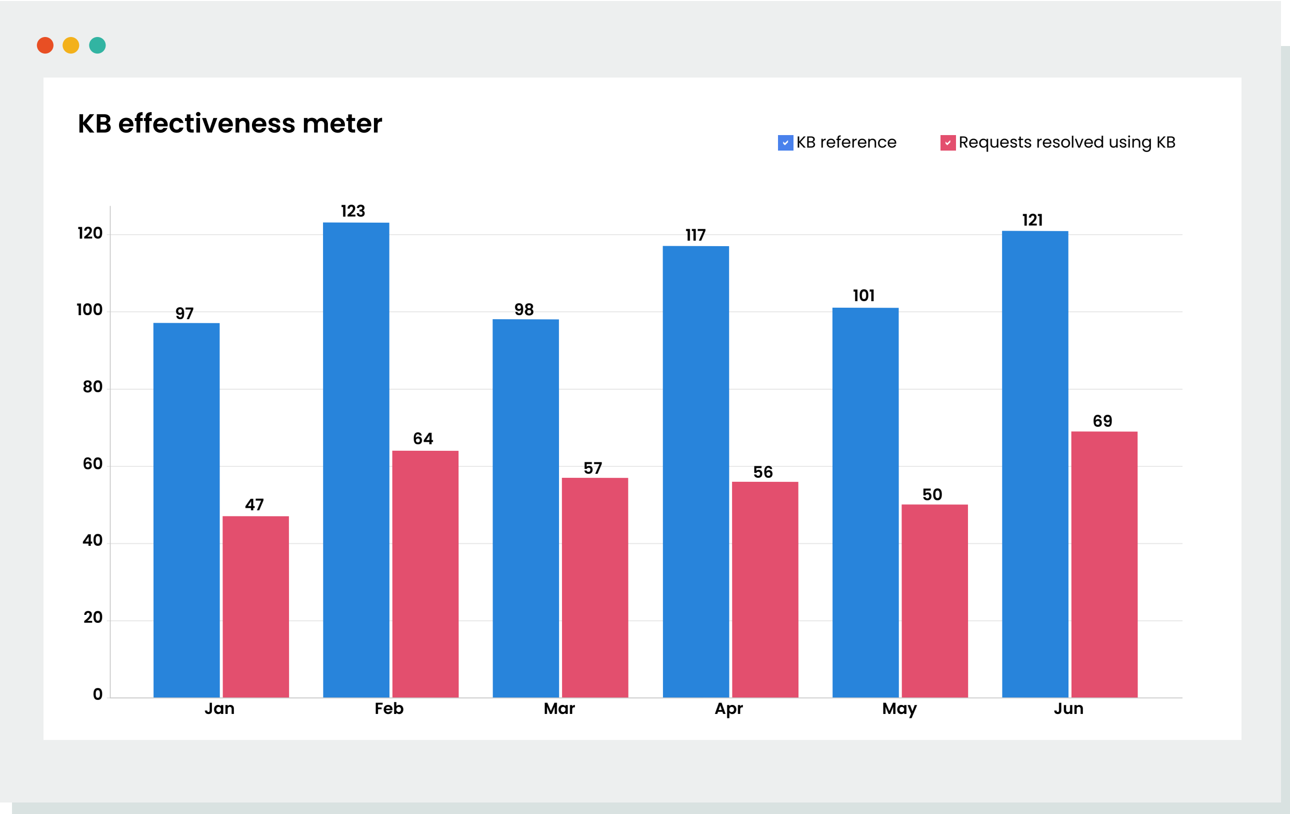
c. Having outdated KB articles:

Frequently updating articles is key to a healthy knowledge base. So, it's important to ensure the KB is constantly updated with the latest, relevant, and contextual information.

An age-tier report of KB articles like the one below will be useful to keep track of the freshness of your knowledge base portal.



To evaluate the usefulness of KB articles, look into the number of times KB articles were referenced in your help desk tickets, and the number of requests that were resolved using KB articles. If the two are closely aligned with each other, it denotes the effectiveness of KB articles. Here's a sample report that shows the trend of requests resolved using KB articles and the number of occasions KB articles were referenced over a period.



As per this report, there is a significant difference between the number of requests resolved using KB articles and the number of times the KB articles have been referred. This is an indication that the KB articles are ineffective.

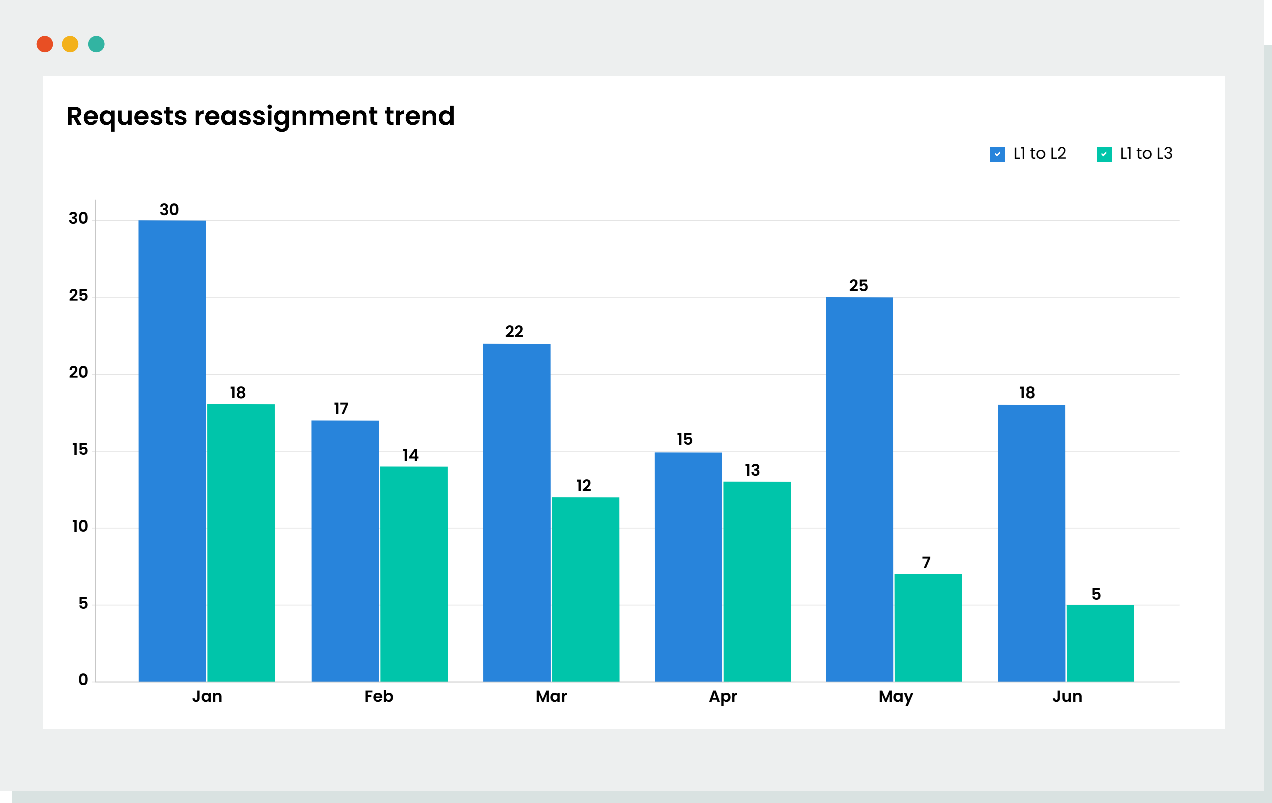
4

Going overboard with specialized tech-teams

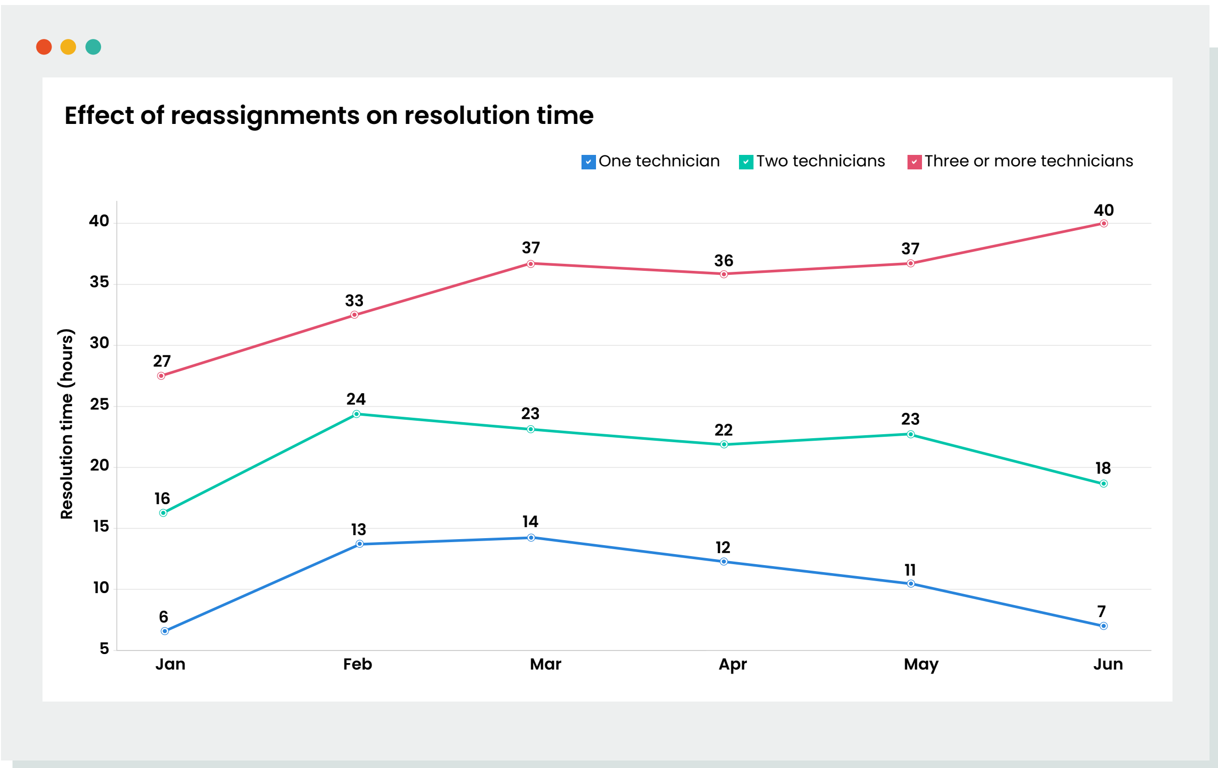
Every help desk comprises of L1 technicians who handle basic requests and L2 technicians who specialize in specific areas of the help desk. Common requests are resolved by L1 technicians, while L2 technicians work on the complex requests that are passed on to them by L1 technicians.

Two levels of technicians will be the optimum number for any help desk. Further levels will only lead to technicians bouncing tickets among themselves and delay the resolution process as L1. This also leaves end users to deal with a new technician each time their request gets reassigned, leading to frustration, and dissatisfaction.

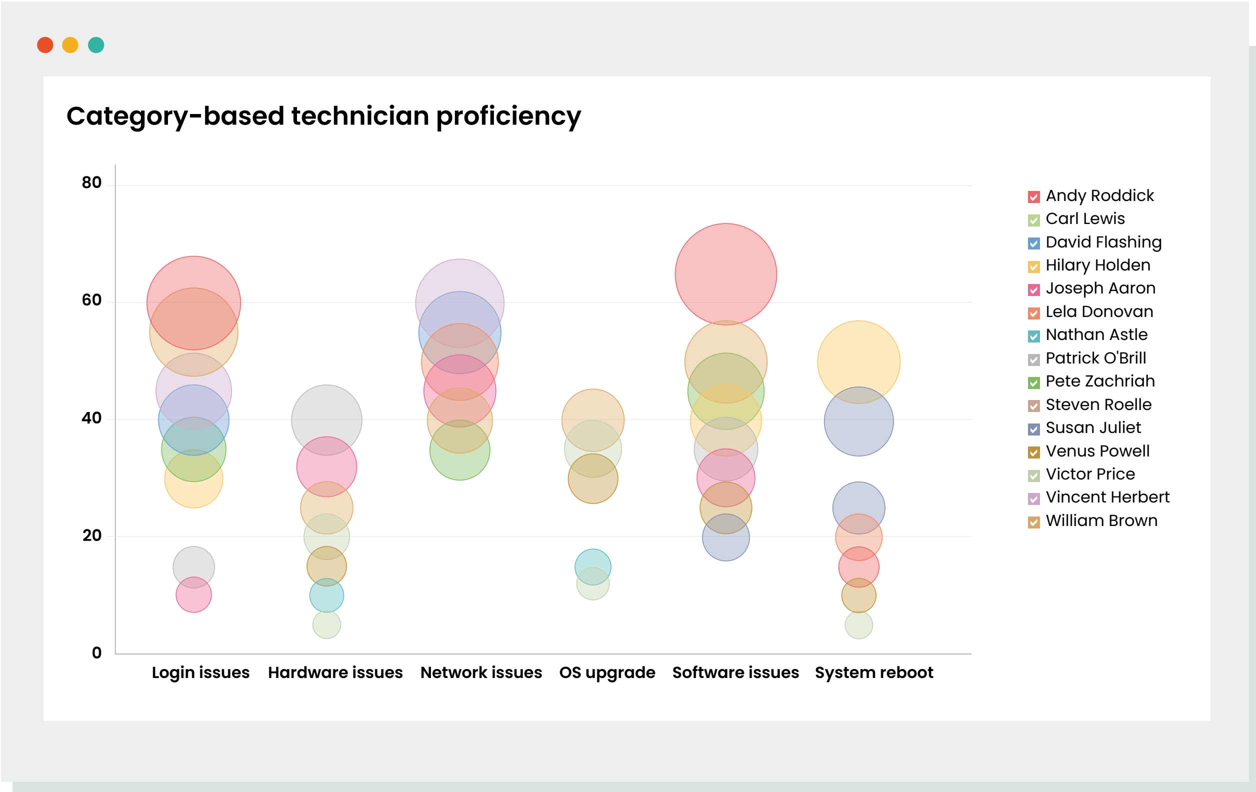
To ensure your help desk doesn't fall prey to these practices, keep tabs on the number of times a request moves across different technician levels. Here's a sample report that shows a time trend of requests getting reassigned.



To visualize how technician changes affect the overall resolution time of requests, compare the resolution time of requests which are resolved by one, two, or more technicians. The sample report below shows that the overall resolution time increases with the increase in the number of technicians involved.



Perform skill-gap analysis frequently to understand skill gaps among L1 technicians. A technician proficiency report, like the one below, will help you identify the technicians' efficiency against various service categories.



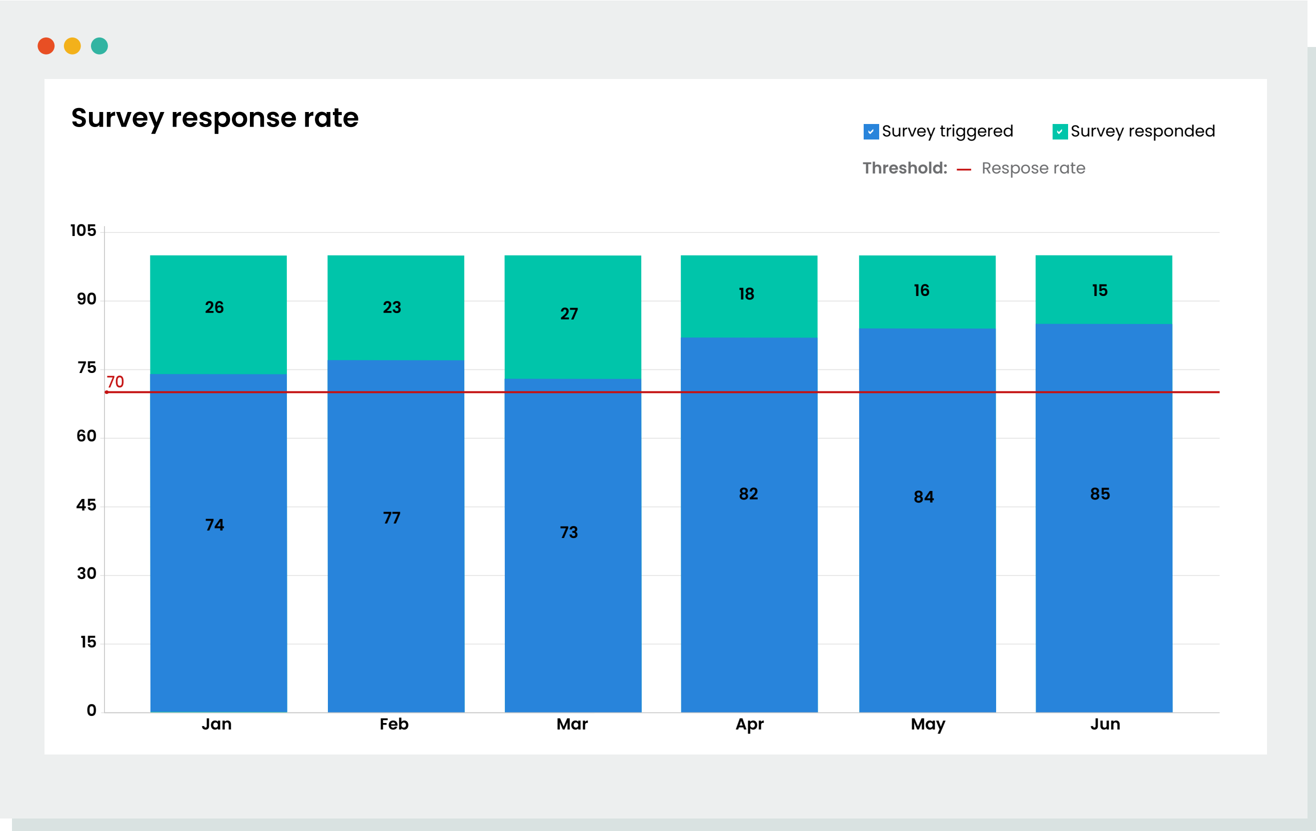
It's clear from the report that there’s an even distribution of technicians to tackle requests of varying complexities for most categories. For categories such as network issues and software issues, there’s only a handful of technicians who are capable of handing requests in these categories. This points to a clear skill gap among technicians in these categories. This calls for advanced training for technicians in these areas.

5

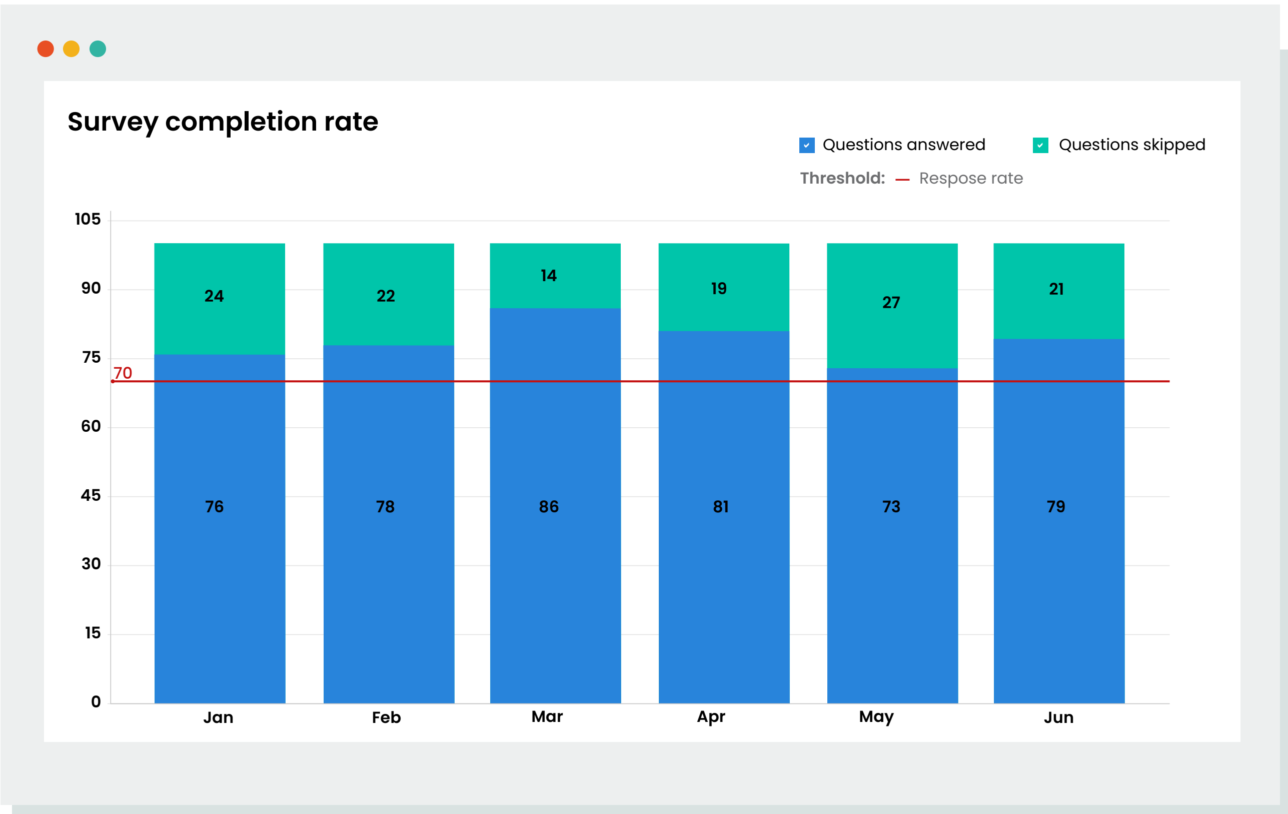
Making the feedback collection process incessantly lengthy

Collecting end-user feedback is the last leg of the request resolution process—one that provides the help desk with deeper insights into its strengths and weaknesses. User surveys are of great help while measuring technician performance, assessing service strategy, evaluating processes, and measuring how help desk performance affects end-users' productivity and, in turn, the revenue. However, feedback surveys themselves become a source of distress for end users owing to the help desks bombarding end users with notifications prompting them to take the survey. Often these survey forms are needlessly lengthy with irrelevant or unnecessary questions, and sometimes users have to fill out more than one user survey form.

A healthy practice is to keep the user survey questionnaire short and contextual. Large organizations (5,000 and more employees) can skip sending the survey questionnaire to every user who raises a request. Instead, they should send it to users who have raised two or more questions in the same category. Most important is tracking how users respond to the survey. A 70% response rate to your surveys can be considered the optimal response rate.
Here's a sample report.



You can delve deeper and explore the number of questions answered and skipped to understand if your survey forms are lengthy. Here's a sample report:



6

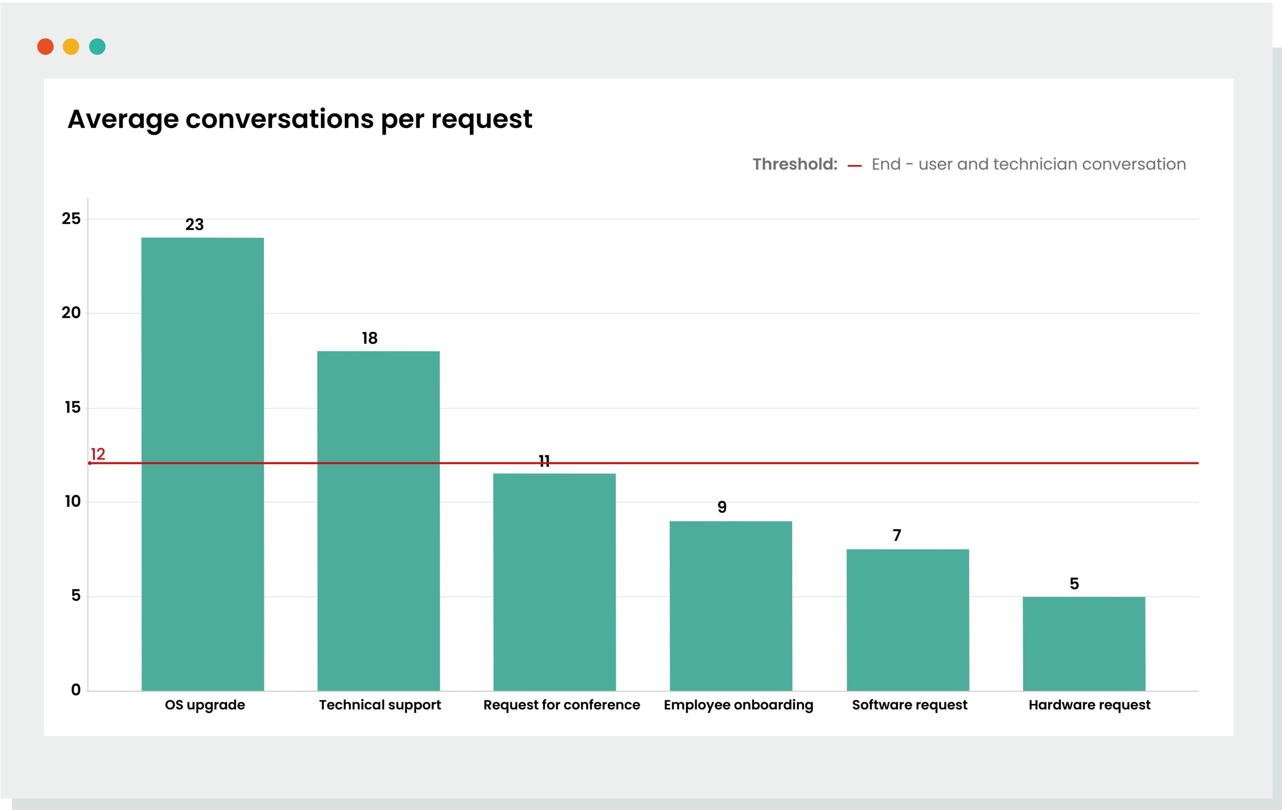
Missing the human component in your help desk

Help desks are in the business of servicing people, so the human component is not only critical but can also prove to be its salvation. Imagine you have this issue: Your laptop heats unusually. You raise a request with the help desk. The technician tells you that the battery needs to be replaced, and gives you a spare laptop to use in the meantime. Now you know that getting spare parts for your laptop usually takes a long time, and your request isn't likely to be completed anytime soon. Thankfully, your technician calls you once a week to provide updates on the status of your request until it is completed a month later.

Now imagine if the human component is missing in the example above. That is, instead of your technician calling you with updates, you're the one chasing after your technician for updates through the ticketing portal. It can be frustrating and exhausting!

While the ticketing portal can help streamline ticket resolution, one thing it can't emulate is a human connection. Encourage technicians to reach out to end users personally and provide updates, particularly for long-pending requests. Acknowledge the emotional aspect of the end-user issues and offer human interaction alongside a swift technical resolution. This can go a long way in ensuring a positive experience for end users.

The report below shows the number of conversations in requests that are long pending. A measurable threshold like the one in the graph below can be created to ensure a considerable percentage of the conversation happens over the phone or in person. This can help add the human component to your service operations.



Conclusion

Happy and productive end users are critical for an organization, and a great service desk goes a long way to ensure this. Help desks shouldn't follow antiquated traditions and expect to cater to the needs of today's tech-savvy end users. Introducing innovative ideas and implementing new processes is necessary. However, this shouldn't come at the cost of employee satisfaction. Help desks should strike the balance between implementing new ideas and ensuring end users receive a positive experience every time they interact with the help desk. Since there are a lot of variables that contribute to end-user satisfaction, it's important that help desks evaluate themselves—their processes, tools, services, service quality, and technicians—frequently to ensure they deliver high quality service.

In this e-book, we shine the spotlight on a few common help desk practices that may be hurting your customer experience, and offer solutions for how you can implement new initiatives without impacting your end-users' experience.

About

ManageEngine Analytics Plus

ManageEngine Analytics Plus is a self-service business intelligence and IT analytics solution that integrates with several popular help desk applications, such as ServiceNow, Zendesk, and **ManageEngine ServiceDesk Plus**. Analytics Plus also integrates with other IT applications used for network and application management, project management, endpoint security management, and more. Powered by AI, machine learning, and natural language processing, Analytics Plus features an AI assistant that can display stunning visual responses to voice and text comments. This ITSM solution also features capabilities such as importing data from multiple sources, data blending, trend forecasting, real-time sharing and collaboration, and advanced computing and analysis.

Download a 30-day free trial of Analytics Plus to kickstart your IT analytics journey. Want to know more about the product before giving it a try? **Sign up for a free virtual tour with our experts**.

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across the world

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management experience

90+
products
and free tools

190+
countries
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